

Nenthead Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112116
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337843
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheila Mawer

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Hillditch
Headteacher	Mrs Debbie Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed seven lessons and saw two teachers and two teaching assistants. Meetings were also held with staff and pupils and two representatives of the governing body. In observing the school's work a range of documents were examined including the school improvement plan, assessment information, safeguarding procedures and records of monitoring and evaluation. The inspector also analysed the 16 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. In addition, questionnaires were received from pupils and staff.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work, but looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- Evidence that all groups of pupils, especially boys in their writing and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress through the school.
- Whether school leaders are doing all they can to improve attendance.
- How well the collaborative leadership within the federation, including the governing body, is focused on raising attainment and driving and sustaining improvements at Nenthead School.
- How effectively the children's needs in Reception are being met in the mixed-age class.

Information about the school

This is a much smaller than average-size primary school, where pupils are taught in two classes. The school serves an isolated village community, high on the moors of the North Pennines. Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds. A broadly average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very high. The proportion of pupils moving in and out of the school at other than the usual times is higher than average.

In 2006 the school federated with a small school nearby at Alston. The two schools share a headteacher and governing body. The headteacher was appointed in November 2009. An assistant headteacher is in charge at Nenthead and other leadership roles are spread across the federation. The school has gained an Eco-Schools Green Flag Award as well as Healthy School status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Nenthead continues to provide a good education for its pupils. The school is at the heart of this isolated village and successfully creates a caring and supportive environment for its pupils and their families. One parent endorsed this in writing, 'The school is a very homely and comfortable place with well-rounded staff who nurture my child very well.' Pupils' contributions to the school and wider communities are outstanding. Substantial examples of their work are proudly displayed in the school. Working with their federated school and inspired by the landscape along their railway, they recently worked with a local artist to make a mosaic for Alston station. Through excellent relationships and good safeguarding arrangements, pupils are happy and safe in school. They know how to keep healthy and fit. When asked to choose the sort of clubs they would like after school, nearly everyone requested sporting activities. Pupils receive a good curriculum and strong individual guidance. This enables them to develop into well-behaved, confident and courteous individuals. Attendance, although average, is not as high as the school would like. This is because persistent absence among a very small minority of pupils is above average.

Many children start school with skills that are below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in Reception, but opportunities for them to plan their own learning are more limited. Pupils' progress as they move through the rest of the school is good overall, but stronger in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 they reach broadly average attainment and achieve well. Test results in 2010 were above average, although the cohort was very small, and current attainment in Year 6 shows an improving trend. This is due to better provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who now make good progress. Teaching is good overall, but stronger in Key Stage 2. At times in Key Stage 1 the pace of learning is not quick enough and work is not always closely matched to the needs of the most able.

The headteacher's good leadership and the sharing of expertise within the federation are bringing considerable advantages to the school and good improvements. Self-evaluation is effective in providing school leaders with a focused view of the school's performance and what needs to be done to improve further. As a result boys' writing has improved significantly over the past year and their attainment is rising by the end of Key Stage 2. The governing body is sharing in the school's clear strategic direction and its good capacity to improve further by establishing working parties to monitor and evaluate the school's performance formally. The school gives good value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate pupil's progress in Key Stage 1 by:

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- making sure that in the teaching, work is more closely matched to the needs of all pupils and particularly the most able
- ensuring that time in lessons is used productively and that the pace of teaching and learning improves
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by giving the children more opportunities to plan the direction of their own learning
- Improve attendance by working even more closely with parents and carers of the few children with low attendance, so that they value the time their children spend in school fully
- Strengthen the role of the governing body by implementing their plans to set up working parties to monitor and evaluate the school's performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Nearly all pupils say how much they enjoy school. Their positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute strongly to good progress in lessons and rising attainment. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenges set by their teachers, use their initiative and are keen to succeed. Pupils who find learning difficult benefit especially from small classes and the individual support they receive helps them to share their ideas and make good progress. These positive aspects of pupils' personal development were seen in a numeracy lesson in which older pupils explored different methods to multiply numbers. They all worked exceptionally well together, concentrated hard on difficult work and used their thinking skills productively to develop their own ideas. With strong work place skills and good achievement, pupils are well-prepared for the future.

Pupils are justifiably proud of the excellent contribution they make to the school and wider community. Whether they are selling Fair Trade goods at the community breakfast or making bug boxes for the wild life area, they are highly committed to improving the school and their village. They join various committees such as the school council and eco-group eagerly and raise funds for many worthy causes enthusiastically, including buying an acre of rainforest as part of their efforts into sustainability. All pupils say they feel safe in school and are extremely confident in using 'smart rules' to keep safe on the Internet. They say there is no bullying. Pupils thoroughly enjoy a wide range of sporting activities and have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and reflected in their caring, reflective and mature attitudes and beliefs.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most of the teaching is good and with examples of outstanding practice in Key Stage 2. Lessons are underpinned by excellent relationships. Teachers use different resources to present lessons in an interesting way and keep pupils motivated. The key aims of each lesson are shared with pupils so they know clearly what is expected of them. In the best lessons, teachers plan challenging work that successfully meets the needs of all learners and especially the most able. In a very successful lesson in Key Stage 2, the teacher engaged pupils exceptionally well in exploring their ideas of what 'home' meant to them. The teacher set very high expectations, used excellent texts from literature to extend the learning and maintained an effective pace throughout. She was rewarded with a very lively discussion and pupils made excellent progress. At times in Key Stage 1, the very effective strategies used in Key Stage 2, especially in extending the learning of the most able pupils and maintaining a lively pace, are not always as strongly promoted. Assessment is effective. Marking is good and in the best practice, pupils are using their targets and responding positively to their teachers' helpful marking to review and improve their work.

Pupils' interests and well-being in the mixed age classes are taken fully into account when planning the imaginative curriculum. Its structure around topics and the incorporation of writing skills across different subjects has had a very positive impact on encouraging boys to write more often and is improving their skills. The curriculum is enriched and broadened

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through a very good range of extra-curricular activities as well as a wealth of visits and visitors. Clubs after school are planned very well around a range of important skills. Recent visitors to the school have supported a very good road safety week.

Pupils are supported and nurtured well throughout their time in school. Staff know their pupils exceptionally well and any concerns are quickly resolved. Good systems are used to identify under-achievement and provide early intervention and good support for the very large group of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. New pupils to the school are sensitively helped to participate fully in school life. Although pupils and their parents and carers receive good guidance from school and different agencies about the importance of attending school regularly, a small number of pupils continue to be persistent absentees.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Ambitious leadership, based on effective teamwork, is sharply focused on driving improvements, raising attainment and achieving the best outcomes for the school within the federation. The headteacher and assistant headteacher are central to the school's direction and success. Strong contributions from staff, the governing body, parents and carers and pupils to school improvement are greatly valued. In particular, the co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been particularly effective in boosting their progress through improved provision. All leaders ensure that there is no discrimination in the school. Equality of opportunity is generally promoted well, while recognising that the needs of the most able pupils in Key Stage 1 are not always fully met. However, significant improvements have been made in narrowing the gap between boys' and girls' writing. Monitoring by school leaders and the introduction of a good tracking system have strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body is knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Governors fulfil their legal responsibilities very diligently, especially in ensuring that thorough safeguarding procedures and practices are robustly in place and meet requirements fully. They are very keen to play a greater part in monitoring the school's performance formally and have set up a number of committees to begin this process.

Links with parents and carers are effective. Regular community breakfasts build on the positive relationships, while the school's improved website supports good communications. The federation strongly promotes the partnership of the two schools and this extends to other organisations. These links give valuable experiences to pupils that the school alone would find difficult to sustain. Community cohesion is promoted well in this inclusive

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school and support for the local community is very strong. At the school's harvest festival and carol service for example, the whole community is invited to attend and stay on for refreshments. Pupils have increasing opportunities to develop their understanding of the wider world through a residential visit to London and by providing financial support for an organisation bringing clean water to a village in Africa.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Within a safe and supportive learning environment the children make satisfactory progress from their different starting points. By the start of Year 1, many are working just below the expected levels for children of this age. Progress in children's personal development is good. This is because they share a classroom with older pupils who quickly help them to settle into a strong family atmosphere. Already they are learning to share resources and behave well. Resources for indoor and outdoor learning are generally good and children enjoy playing outdoors. During the inspection they worked happily together building 'Noah's Ark'. Good interaction with the teaching assistant helped the children to keep on task and solve the problem of how to get the animals safely on to the ark.

Adults work closely together as a team and the teaching is satisfactory. Although children receive good levels of support in adult-directed activities, the planning and organisation in the mixed-age class gives them fewer opportunities to choose the direction of their own learning or to have continuous access to provision. Regular assessments are made, so that staff have an accurate picture of the children's abilities and how well they are progressing. Shared leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders ensure good links with parents and carers and provide a safe environment for children.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Over half of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority of them are very supportive of the school's work. All comment positively about their children enjoying school, keeping safe and healthy and being informed about their progress. Several parents comment on the good levels of care the school provides. A small minority of parents and carers do not consider that teaching or leadership and management are good or that their children are making enough progress. The inspector judged overall that these aspects are good. However, the more able pupils in Key Stage 1 are not always making enough progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Nenthead Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 26 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	63	5	31	1	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	69	5	31	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	50	6	38	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	38	8	50	2	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	8	50	6	38	2	13	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	56	5	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	9	56	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	56	5	31	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	56	5	31	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	56	5	31	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	63	4	25	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	8	50	5	31	2	13	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	69	3	19	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Nenthead Primary School, Alston, CA9 3LS

Thank you for the very friendly welcome you gave to me when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed being with you in lessons and around the school. I talked to most of you during the inspection and I greatly valued your views. The questionnaires you completed were very positive. They told me how much you all enjoy school and feel safe. This letter is to tell you about the judgements I have made about your school. I agree with you and your parents and carers that you go to a good school.

These are some of the best things I found out during the inspection.

- You are all brilliant at helping to make your school and the community better. I saw how proud you all were to receive the lovely photograph of the mosaic you made about the local railway.
- Teaching is good and most of you are making good progress.
- You all receive a lot of care and support in your happy and friendly school. I noticed in particular your good behaviour and how well you all get on together.
- The curriculum provides many exciting things for you to do and in particular it keeps you all fit and healthy.

Your headteacher, the assistant headteacher, staff and the governing body here and in the Alston school are doing a good job to make Nenthead successful. I have asked them to give the children in Reception more time to choose some of their own learning and to make sure all lessons in the school are good ones. The governing body will be visiting school more often to check how well you are all doing. I know how much the staff would really like to see some of you taking fewer days away from school so you can make more progress and also receive awards for good attendance. I agree with them that good attendance is really important to enable you to learn well.

I hope you will all continue to work hard and try to be in school every day.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Sheila Mawer
Lead Inspector

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